

Appl No.: 10/533,188
Amdt. dated 11/13/2007
Reply to Office Action of July 13, 2007

Amendments to the Claims:

1-9. (Canceled)

10. (Currently Amended) A method of testing the continuity of a connection between an integrated circuit pin and a circuit board where the integrated circuit pin is connected to a plurality of integrated circuit pins forming a first group, the method comprising the steps of:

identifying a second group of integrated circuit pins having electrical properties relatable to the first group;

applying one or more first test signals to the first group of pins and measuring one or more respective first voltage differences occurring between the first group of pins and a reference voltage;

applying one or more second test signals to the second group of pins and measuring one or more respective second voltage differences occurring between the second group of pins and a reference voltage; and

on the basis of the measurements, extracting and comparing a non-linear characteristic of the first and second groups of pins to obtain a measure of said continuity.

11-27. (Canceled)

28. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for testing the continuity of connections in a circuit path within a product, said path comprising a plurality of integrated circuit device pins forming a first group connected to a first circuit node such that current flows via the pins and through associated semiconductor junctions to a second circuit node, the apparatus comprising:

a first tester for applying M test signals to the first group of pins and measuring M voltage differences occurring between the first circuit node and a reference, where M is an integer greater than zero;

a second tester for applying N test signals to a second group of pins expected to have a behaviour identical to or relatable to the first group of pins and measuring N voltage

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differences occurring between a second circuit node connected to the second group of pins and a reference, where N is an integer greater than zero; and

a processor responsive to the voltage differences for deriving or comparing a non-linear characteristic of the first and second groups of pins to obtain a measure of said continuity.

29. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28, in which the first and second groups comprise the same number of device pins.

30. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, in which each device connection in the first group has a corresponding device connection in the second group being members of the same or similar family of device technologies and of similar function.

31. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, in which the first and second non-linear characteristics are compared and a faulty connection is indicated by the data processor if the difference between them exceeds a first threshold.

32. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, in which the M test signals and the N test signals are substantially identical current waveforms.

33. (Previously Presented) Apparatus as claimed in claim 28, in which the M test signals and the N test signals are DC signals of switchable value and voltage offsets are calculated from the voltage differences, the offsets are compared and a faulty connection is indicated if the difference in offsets exceeds a threshold value.

34. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29, in which the M test signals and the N test signals comprise an AC component superimposed on a DC component and the magnitude of harmonic components of the voltage differences are compared and a faulty connection is indicated if the difference in harmonic components exceeds a threshold value.

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35. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28, in which the comparison of non-linear characteristics is performed directly by extracting a non-linear characteristic based on forming a difference between the first voltage difference and the second voltage difference.

36-37. (Canceled)

38. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28, wherein the first and second testers are adapted such that the test signals applied to the groups of pins comprise discrete time samples of a sinusoidal or other waveform having little or zero low-order harmonic content and the testers are further adapted to use the measured voltage differences as discrete samples in reconstructing the response to a sinusoidal or other waveform having little or zero harmonic content input for harmonic analysis.

39. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28, further comprising a further test signal generator for generating a probe current which is injected via a further device connection into a selected integrated circuit, and wherein the continuity test is repeated and the selected integrated circuit is indicated as having an unacceptable connection if the non-linear characteristic varies by more than a first predetermined threshold, or is indicated as having an acceptable connection if the non-linear characteristic varies by more than a second predetermined threshold of opposite sign to the first predetermined threshold.